



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Theatre Program Scrapbooks

NMAH.AC.1205

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Theatre Program Scrapbooks
Date:	1893-1948, undated (bulk 1897-1918)
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1205
Creator:	Belasco Theatre (New York, N.Y.) (Publisher) Columbia Theatre (Washington, D.C.) (Publisher) Belasco Theatre (Washington, D.C.) (Publisher) Herald Square Theatre (New York, N.Y.) (Publisher) Grand Opera House (Washington, D.C.) (Publisher) Keith-Albee's New York Hippodrome (Publisher) Knickerbocker Theatre (Washington, D.C.) (Publisher) Lafayette Square Opera House (Washington, D.C.) (Publisher) Majestic Theatre (Washington, D.C.) (Publisher) New Amsterdam Theatre (New York, N.Y.) (Publisher)
Source:	Little Theatre of Alexandria (Donor)
Extent:	2 Cubic feet (6 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	These scrapbooks were created to record programs from various theaters in Washington, D.C. and New York. They contain playbills, advertisements, and cast lists.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated by the Little Theatre of Alexandria, Virginia in 2010 which had received them from Mrs. Mark Price in 1963.

Provenance

Not much is known about the history of these six volumes. They appear to have been either a theater owner or booking agent's scrapbook of productions. They were donated to the Little Theatre of Alexandria by Mrs. Mark Price in 1963. The Little Theatre of Alexandria donated them to the Archives Center in 2010.

Related Materials

AC0060 Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Theater and Motion Picture subject categories

AC0300 Sam DeVincent Collection of Illustrated American Sheet Music

AC0404 Archives Center Collection of Business Americana, Theater and Motion Picture subject categories

AC1211 Donald J. Stubblebine Collection

The British spelling of this collection's title is on the scrapbooks.

Processing Information

Processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archives technician, June 2010; supervised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Theatre Scrapbook Collection, 1893-1948, undated, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use.

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Biographical / Historical

American theater came into its own during the nineteenth century. American musical theater is generally acknowledged to have begun with *The Black Crook*, which opened September 12, 1866 at the 3,200-seat Niblo's Garden on Broadway in New York City and ran for a record-breaking 474 performances. By the end of the century most American cities and towns of any size boasted an opera house or theater, with many cities having numerous venues for traveling productions. Local companies as well as companies out of New York City mounted productions of musicals and dramas for the theater-going public. Showmen such as Florenz Ziegfeld, Charles Dillingham, David Belasco, and Charles Frohman mounted traveling productions of their successful New York productions and sent them on the road. In the days before the existence of unions for actors, musicians, and stagehands these productions could have huge casts working many hours and nearly every day of the week. Theater-producing organizations employed booking agents to schedule the production's tour. Each theater usually had its own management team, many being independently owned and operated. Washington, D.C., like any other city, had more than one theater competing for the public's business. The Washington theater district was generally located between Lafayette Square and the area around 15th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Not much is known about these six volumes of theater playbill scrapbooks. They appear to have belonged to either a theater owner or booking agent. They were donated to the Little Theatre of Alexandria by Mrs. Mark Price in 1963 and may have been salvaged by Mrs. Price when a theater was demolished or perhaps acquired by an acquaintance or member of her family who worked in a theater.

Scope and Contents

Though two of the volumes are labeled "Theatre Program" these volumes actually consist of playbills. The volumes contain an extensive array of playbills for productions that played in Washington, D.C. and New York City. The printed broadsides contain information on the theater management, the production, cast list, production personnel, synopsis, and the program of the play. The playbills are mainly for musical productions, but there are playbills for dramas as well. Each volume was numbered, some have retained the actual number on the front of the volume, and two volumes do not but can be put in the proper order from the dates of the playbills therein. Many personalities and supporting players of the period are listed on the playbills.

Many Washington, D.C. theaters are represented: the Grand Opera House, the Majestic, the Columbia, Poli's, The Lafayette Square Opera House in Washington, D.C. that was eventually renamed The Belasco

and others. There are early playbills for the Knickerbocker Theater which became famous for the tragedy that occurred there in 1922 with the collapse of its roof due to heavy snow fall. There are also many New York City theaters represented, including the New Amsterdam, Hammerstein's Victoria, and the Herald Square Theatre. There is one playbill for the Bijou Theatre in Richmond, Virginia. Also, there are playbills for theaters in Montauk, New York. There is an ad for *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, Jr. at the Columbia Theater, Washington, D.C. during the season of 1905-1905. There are a few theater programs pasted into the volumes, many for *The Lambs' Star Gambol*, one for a Ruth St. Denis dance program, and two "souvenir books" for the Hippodrome in New York City.

The volumes are arranged chronologically according to year. The exception is *Volume 3*, which carries an earlier date than *Volume 1* because a few stray playbills from 1893-1897 were pasted into the back of the volume. The bulk of *Volume 3's* contents span the dates 1905-1907. *Volume 3* and *Volume 4* are labeled on the cover, "Theatre Program". *Volume 6* is indexed alphabetically according to title of play. There is one folder of loose playbills, a *Woodrow Wilson Memorial Address*, by Edwin Anderson Alderman, 1924, and a broadside for the Sanitary Grocery Company in Alexandria, Virginia, 1932.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in one series, chronologically.

Series 1, Theatre Program Scrapbooks, 1893-1948, undated

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Poli's Theatre (Washington, D.C.)
- Theater
- Vaudeville

Types of Materials:

- Playbills
- Scrapbooks -- 20th century
- Theater programs

Names:

- Little Theatre of Alexandria

Container Listing

Series 1: Theatre Program Scrapbooks, 1893-1948, undated

Box 1, Folder 1	Volume 1, 1897-1902
Box 1, Folder 2	Volume 2, 1903-1905, undated
Box 2, Folder 1	Volume 3, 1893-1907, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Volume 4, 1907-1908, undated
Box 3, Folder 1	Volume 5, 1908-1911
Box 4, Folder 1	Volume 6, 1911-1918, undated
Box 4, Folder 2	Loose theater playbills, 1921-1948
Box 4, Folder 2	Woodrow Wilson Memorial Address, Alderman, Edwin Anderson, 1924
Box 4, Folder 2	Advertising broadside for Sanitary Grocery Company, Alexandria, Virginia, 1932

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